



# NEWS

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**DATE: August 27, 2004**

## **Pennsylvania Celebrates Signing of First CSP Contract in Raystown Watershed**

*Osterburg, PA* –The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, celebrated the signing of the first contract for the new Conservation Security Program (CSP) in the Raystown Watershed on Friday, August 27, 2004, 1:00 pm at the Marlin Heisey Farm in Osterburg, PA.

Guest speakers for the program included USDA Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Mark Rey, National Association of Conservation Districts President Gary Mast, and Pennsylvania NRCS State Conservationist Robin Heard.

“We are excited to announce that all eligible applications in the 18 nationally selected watersheds will be awarded contracts,” announced Rey. “It’s great to be able to recognize the conservation ethic of all of the eligible applicants with funding,” Rey added.

Authorized through the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, the most recent Farm Bill; CSP is designed as an entitlement program to recognize and reward farmers who are working to the highest level of conservation on their land, as well as to provide incentives to  
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those farmers who have begun that process. It will focus on supporting conservation efforts on working, or production agricultural lands. Only farmers within the watershed boundaries were eligible to apply.

“We are excited about recognizing the efforts of Pennsylvania farmers,” said Robin Heard, State Conservationist. “There are good things taking place on the land. And the new Conservation Security Program is recognizing that work with stewardship payments for what the farmer has done, maintenance payments to help them continue those practices, and enhancement payments to help them do just a bit more,” Heard added.

Thirty-six contracts are being awarded in the 616,500-acre Raystown Watershed. Cropland makes up 10,160 of those acres with pasture adding 585 acres for total payments of \$119,143 over the life of the contracts (5-10 years).

Applications were made in specific tiers based on how complete the conservation work was. Pennsylvania had 16-Tier I contracts, 6-Tier II, and 14-Tier III, with Tier III being the best you could do. Nationally there were 2,188 contracts awarded for \$35 million.

Robin Heard, NRCS State Conservationist praised the partners for their support of conservation and of NRCS and USDA programs. “We couldn’t do it without the support of the conservation districts and our other State partners,” she stated.

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This is an important step for conservation,” said Gary Mast, NACD president. “We are proud to have supported this program for America’s farmers.”

CSP was scheduled to be offered in one-eighth of the 8-digit watersheds every year. Watersheds for 1995 are being looked at in the next 4 months. Increased funding could mean the addition of more watersheds which would make Raystown eligible again sooner.

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